



MK Nature Center

STREAM

The Seasonal Newsletter of the Morrison Knudsen Nature Center FALL 2021

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MK Nature Center employee Nicole Crandall took this snapshot of a lounging bobcat at MKNC in September.

Bobcat sightings are fairly common at the nature center, in Boise and surrounding areas. The smallest of the three wild cats of Idaho, bobcats are versatile predators, hunting for birds, squirrels, rabbits, and mice to name a few prey species. Bobcats pose little threat to humans, though they might take the opportunity to prey upon a house cat or backyard chicken.

Bobcats are bigger than most domestic house cats and have distinct black ear tufts, black leg bars and spotty fur. They are crepuscular, hunting at dawn and dusk. Because they are usually solitary, maintain a territory, and are widespread, re-locating bobcats is not practical. Our towns, yards, and pets have encroached on their native range, so choosing to tolerate and enjoy their presence is the best option. If you observe one of these spotted wild cats, consider yourself lucky.



Nature Notes

Vicky Runnoe, Conservation Education Supervisor, IDFG

The arrival of autumn brings surprises, some expected and others unforeseen. The arrival of sockeye salmon was truly an unexpected surprise. These beautiful fish have never before been exhibited at the nature center. Our visitors are enjoying watching them turn from flashy silver into their iconic sockeye red and green. We watch them initiate spawning behaviors and marvel at their journey and life cycle.

Sockeye salmon, chinook salmon, steelhead, sturgeon and kokanee are here, both currently and in the past, because we are fortunate to work with an incredibly dedicated group of colleagues with Fish and Game's Fisheries Bureau. The possibility of sockeye started with an idea and an email. The parts fell together as a long line of people worked to make this idea a reality. As a result, our visitors get to see sockeye, many of them for the first time in their lives. These fish may not be Idaho's Snake River sockeye, but that does not diminish the excitement visitors and staff feel or the incredible educational opportunity the fish represent.

Dedication and a willingness to help extends throughout our agency. Our questions are patiently answered; information is clarified; and help is offered. For all of this, we are incredibly grateful. As our agency's new headquarters building is completed, we look forward to once again seeing colleagues from near and far as they wander the nature center, enjoying a break from a meeting or their daily routine. We will be sure to share surprises, both the expected and the unanticipated.

Got Eggs?

Sue Dudley, Volunteer Coordinator and Gift Shop Manager, MKNC, IDFG



"The whole process was very efficient and exciting to be a part of. The most enjoyable part was trapping the fish and grabbing them by the tail and separating them by gender. It was a memorable experience that I believe I will utilize for my future." - Derek Item

August is a busy month for Idaho Fish and Game Staff at Rapid River Fish Hatchery. They process 3,830 Chinook salmon to collect 5.2 million eggs for their spawning program.

Every year they put the call out for IDFG employees to come spend a day with them to help with spawning. Volunteers are treated to gorgeous views and huge Chinook salmon.

Two of MK Nature Center's staff took advantage of this fun opportunity to learn something new and be around some amazing fish.



"My time there was an amazing experience to have. Everything was quick and efficient as we all worked together with our own little jobs to do. My favorite fact I learned was that the Rapid River Hatchery is about 92% successful in hatching the eggs; more than any other Great Basin Fish Hatchery."

-Nicole Crandall

Friday & Saturday December 3rd & 4th 2021, 9AM – 5PM



MK NATURE CENTER

HOLIDAY

BIRD SEED SALE

600 S. Walnut Street · Boise, Idaho 83712



Wild Birds Unlimited of Boise has been our faithful partner and supporter from the beginning. They continue to supply high quality seed for what is one of our most successful and popular fundraisers.

As usual, several varieties of seed will be available to feed your favorite birds.



Large selection of holiday gift items, children books, toys, jewelry, and t-shirts.

All Proceeds Support MK Nature Center's Educational Programs!

Contact Sue Dudley with question: sue.dudley@idfg.idaho.gov or 208.287.2900



On August 17th, 15 Wenatchee River sockeye salmon arrived at the MK Nature Center for the first time. Never before have we displayed live sockeye salmon for public viewing! Unlike Idaho's Snake River sockeye salmon that are endangered, these sockeye strayed in their return migration, missing their northerly turn at Kennewick, Washington, and found themselves at Lower Granite Dam. There, they were collected by Idaho Fish and Game, transported to Eagle for genetic testing and then brought to the nature center.

The Wenatchee River population and the Snake River population look identical, but are genetically distinct. Fisheries managers would not want to spawn the two populations together for fear of creating a less robust group of offspring because remember, Snake River sockeye salmon migrate back over 900 miles and 6,500 feet in elevation to spawn at Redfish Lake...they are truly incredible!

To learn more about endangered Snake River sockeye salmon, visit the [Sockeye Salmon](#) webpage.

A special thanks to our colleagues at the Eagle Hatchery and Fisheries Bureau for making this sockeye fish viewing experience possible!



Above: Sockeye Salmon on August 17th at the Nature Center. Photo by Roger Phillips, IDFG. Left: Transformed into the green headed red fish you recognize. Photo taken on September 30th by Roger Phillips, IDFG.

Summer Booths

The 2021 summer booth program was a huge success. Volunteers staffed 88 booths between May and the end of September, reaching 7,686 visitors! Through the summer, booth topics included anadromous fish, the weasel family, Idaho's bears, Idaho's wild cats and dogs, horns/antlers, tracks/scat, beavers, skulls, and more! Our volunteers were so dedicated! Fifteen people joined the force to teach visitors about nature. Many thanks to:



Jon Mathews
Cindy Marlow
Chuck Staben
Bronwyn Myers
Judy Wojcicki
Claire Veseth
(pictured left)
Carolyn King
(pictured right)
Elizabeth Grosse
Michele Andrew
Abby Goodell
Kevin Laughlin
Kim Barr
Martha McClay
Ron Lopez, and
Jenny Kuykendoll



2021-2022 AmeriCorps Member

Mariah Hilliard, AmeriCorps Member, MKNC



Hi everyone! My name is Mariah Hilliard and I'm the new AmeriCorps member at the MK Nature Center. I was born and raised in the Treasure Valley but ventured up to Moscow to enroll in the University of Idaho back in 2017. After four years, I received my degree in Wildlife Resources and have experience with pygmy rabbit surveys, working in a large nursery (plants, not kids), and most recently have spent a summer working at Priest Lake State Park. I am now eager to share what I know as well as continue my learning! Most of my free time is spent with my six-year-old golden retriever, Milo. We are often out hiking, biking, and paddle boarding on the weekends. I'm excited for my new role at the Nature Center and am looking forward to an amazing year!

Friends of MKNC provides the funding for the MKNC AmeriCorps position each year. We welcome Mariah as our 2021-2022 member!

One of These Things is Not Like the Others

Sara Focht, Wildlife Educator, IDFG, MINC

“One of these things just does not belong.” That is what MK Nature Center employee Maddy Saez said to herself when she spotted a bearded dragon on a grassy slope just off the nature center path on a cool August morning! Likely, someone released their unwanted pet at the MK Nature Center, thinking it might be good habitat. It is good habitat if you are a mink, trout, or duck. The dragon was cold and not moving much. Fellow employee Nicole Crandall cranked up the heat in her car as she transported the animal to the Idaho Humane Society. Over the years, MKNC staff have encountered a number of pets left by irresponsible owners, including rabbits, chickens, turtles, cats, and even goldfish! Since these animals are not adapted to living in this environment, their chances for survival are slim to none.



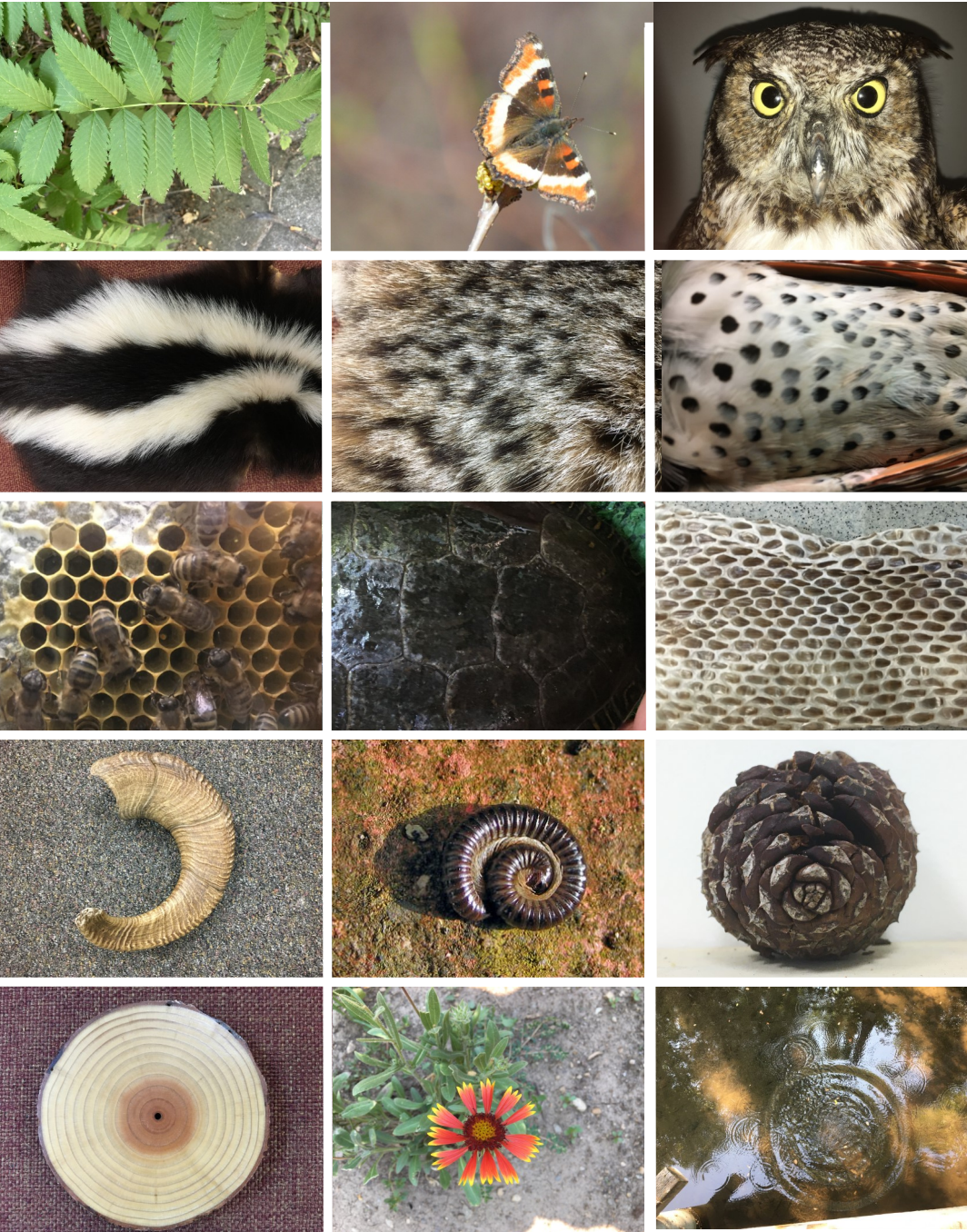
Clockwise starting in upper left: American Mink. Photo by MKNC. Bearded Dragon, photo by Nicole Crandall. Mallard duck, photo by MKNC. Rainbow Trout, photo by IDFG.

Patterns in Nature

Abbey Goodel, IDoTeach Summer Intern 2021

Sometimes patterns in nature can be hard to find or notice. When you look out into the forest or into a field, you may just notice chaos and disorder. However, there are patterns in nature almost everywhere you look. A common math theory that explains this is Chaos Theory; even in places that seem random, there are patterns and repetition.

Patterns are repeatable, regular designs. They can be very complex or very simple. Patterns can also hit almost all your senses, however, the patterns that are usually focused on are visual. Five common visual patterns we see in nature are symmetry, spots and stripes, tessellations, spirals, and radials. Once you are tuned into the types of patterns found in nature, you will start to see them everywhere.



SYMMETRY

SPOTS/STRIPES

TESSELLATIONS

SPIRALS

RADIALS

All photos by Sara Focht MKNC except millipede. Millipede photo by Philip Hay on Flickr (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0).

Pollinators for All!

Sara Focht, Wildlife Educator, MKNC, IDFG

Food chains are a pretty basic concept that most of us understand. At the bottom of every food chain are of course, plants. What people sometimes forget are all the functions and needs of plants from soil, to water, air, protection and of course, pollination! If all these plant-specific variables are not present and suitable, plants won't grow and thrive, undermining the entire food chain.

There is a lot of buzz around pollinators, native plants, and their conservation these days. If plants and insects are not your passion, it does not take too much sleuthing to figure out how you fit in the picture. One in every three bites of food is the result of pollination. Consider my breakfast this morning. I ate oatmeal with flax seed, dried blueberries, walnuts and brown sugar. Four of the five ingredients in my breakfast were made possible by insect pollinators (and one by wind).

Even if you eat higher on the food chain than my overly health oatmeal, you too can find a link from the animal you ate (chicken, beef, pork, wild game) to the plants they ate!

It seems like we are living in a time of disagreement and divisiveness. However, protecting pollinators is something *everyone* can get behind, from vegetarians to hard-core meat eaters! No matter if you buy your food wrapped in plastic or garden and hunt, you are dependent on pollinators!



Circular photos from top to bottom:
Bitterbrush is a common native plant in southern Idaho and crucial food source for big game animals. Photo by Sara Focht, IDFG.
Bumble bees and other native pollinators pollinate bitterbrush. Photo by Ross Winton, IDFG.
Mule deer eat bitterbrush and are a popular game animal. Photo by MKNC.
Big game hunters harvest deer who depend on plants for food. Photo by IDFG.



Volunteers Tricia Mathews and Loren Oesch staff the Pollinators and Big Game booth sponsored by MK Nature Center at the Ada County Soil and Water Conservation District's Pollinator event at Peaceful Belly Farm on Saturday, September 4th.

Degasser Gets an Upgrade

Vicky Runnoe, Conservation Education Supervisor

If you look across the Alpine Lake, you might notice that the old silver “tower” is gone! This was the old degasser. It worked to remove excess gasses such as nitrogen and carbon dioxide, from the water. In addition, the degasser also added oxygen since well water is often under-saturated with oxygen. Fish are healthiest with low levels of nitrogen and carbon dioxide and higher levels of oxygen.

Installed in 2000, the old unit had reached the end of its functional lifetime and needed replacement. In stepped the creative talents of the folks at Bill’s Machine Shop in Emmett. After consulting with Susan about specific requirements, the crew designed and installed a new degassing unit. It is no longer shiny and has a much lower profile, making it barely visible.

Thanks to Susan and Nicole for the important prep work needed to ready the area for installation! In addition, we appreciate the support from the Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game and our colleagues in the Engineering Bureau that made this project possible. The new degasser should provide excellent service well into the future.



Photos on the left show the old degasser in place and after it was removed. Photos on the right show the new view and new degasser (which you cannot see from the path). Photos by Sara Focht and Vicky Runnoe.

FOMKNC Membership Drive

Pam Bly, Board Member, FOMKNC

It's membership time for the Friends of MK Nature Center! Please consider joining us in 2022 and let us tell you why!

In 2021, FOMKNC membership dollars funded:

- 1) **Construction** of an **Outdoor Education Kiosk** that replaced the existing structure;
- 2) **On-going education support** for programming, allowing the MK Nature Center to fund an AmeriCorps member and buy supplies for educational programs.

The Friends are excited to embark on our **next big project in 2022**. As many of you know, Idaho Department of Fish & Game has been building a new headquarters building on the same piece of land adjacent to the MKNC. With the demolition of the old headquarters, the License Desk was moved into the nature center's front room to continue to provide customer service to hunting and fishing licenses and tag purchasers. The new headquarters will be opening its doors this winter. This means the MK Nature Center will regain its space and with it, the opportunity to **redesign the front room with new educational exhibits and displays**. This will be an exciting long-term project. The Friends will be working with nature center staff, Fish and Game, and an interpretive designer to design and make a new vision come to life for nature center visitors. We hope you will participate in this endeavor by renewing your Friends' annual membership.

Your membership at the \$25 or above levels:

- ♦ ensures that the Friends can continue to enhance the educational and environmental experiences at the MK Nature Center;
- ♦ puts your dollars to work on a specific project each year; and
- ♦ provides you with advance notice of Friends' events.

If you renew your membership before January 15th, your name will be entered into a drawing for one of our coveted Friends of the MK Nature Center t-shirts. If you choose to renew at the \$250 or higher level, you will automatically receive a Friends' t-shirt.



You can renew or become a first-time member of FOMKNC by mail: FOMKNC, P.O. Box 604, Boise, ID 83701 or online at <https://www.friendsofmknc.org/donate.html>

***Special Notification:** FOMKNC participates in two fund raisers annually. Both fundraisers support a separate project. 1) Annual FOMKNC Membership Drive (November – January) and 2) Annual Idaho Gives (April-May).*

The MKNC lobby before the license desk was installed. This is the space that will be redesigned with support from FOMKNC. Photo by MKNC.

VOLUNTEERS

Michele Andrew
Kim Baar
Steve Berg
Brent Davy
Kevin Drews
Jon Dudley
Briana Ford
Forrest Green
Elizabeth Grosse
Gary Hundt
Carolyn King
Ron Lopez

Tricia Matthews
Martha McClay
Bronwyn Myers
Lorren Oesch
Lyla Olson
Howard Sheppa
Nolan Thomas
Terry Thomas
Claire Veseth
Roger Wallace
Kevin Wilson

DONORS

Michelle Maughan
Kerry Milligan
Kimberly O'Donnell
Brenda & Dave Pace
Hilda Packard
Rangen

Donors listed here do not include donors who gave to [Friends of MK Nature Center](#) (the Nature Center's 501c3 nonprofit organization).

July

August

September

Images of Fall



Left to right: The Nature Center path carpeted by a sprinkling of yellow leaves. Photo by Sara Focht, MKNC. Wolf Spider photo by Vicky Runnoe, IDFG. Fall colors along the path. Photo by Brian Lawless.

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